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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

11 April 1986

LIBYA: Qadhafi's Likely Response to a US Military Strike [REDACTED]

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Summary

In our view, Qadhafi remains determined to try to use the current crisis with Washington as a means of inflicting a dramatic political defeat on the US and establishing himself as the Third World's most prominent revolutionary leader. By so doing, he also wants to encourage the radical trend inside Libya, thereby consolidating his domestic revolution. [REDACTED]

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Qadhafi's concern about US military intentions almost certainly has increased since the US press alleged last week that Washington has "proof" of Libyan complicity in the West Berlin discotheque attack. Nevertheless, we believe that he is prepared for an escalation of the confrontation. We believe he would halt his aggressive challenge to US interests only if he believed Washington was willing to go so far as an invasion. [REDACTED]

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Attacking Qadhafi's residences would convince him that Washington's objective in the current crisis is his removal. He would be personally shaken by such an attack, and might temporarily put terrorist planning on hold until he perceives that no additional action is forthcoming. On the other hand, a US strike against only facilities housing the Jamahiriyyah Guard, Qadhafi's coup protection force, probably would reduce Libya's inclination to target US officials here. In our view, Qadhafi would regard such an attack as part of Washington's broader campaign to subvert his regime. At the same time, he would interpret US avoidance of his headquarters as a signal that

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Washington is not yet prepared to target him directly, because US officials did not want to risk domestic and international accusations that the US is trying to "assassinate" him. [REDACTED]

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At a minimum, US strikes against Libyan land targets almost certainly would place Qadhafi under intense pressure from radicals inside Libya to retaliate for a US attack by expanding Libya's terrorist campaign against US interests.

--These radicals limit Qadhafi's room to maneuver in a crisis because they currently comprise Qadhafi's only reliable source of domestic support, [REDACTED]

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--A US attack may even incite some radicals assigned to Libyan People's Bureau to conduct terrorist attacks on US citizens without explicit instructions from Tripoli, especially if they believe that their diplomatic status precludes prosecution. [REDACTED]

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Attacking Qadhafi's residences almost certainly would strengthen Qadhafi's determination to establish a covert network inside the US, probably to give Libya the capability to target US government officials and installations in terrorist attacks.

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